(a) whether the Government of Kerala has sought the permission of Central Government for the issue of SLR bonds through the Kerala Power Finance Corporation which is the joint entrepreneur of the State Government and the Kerala State Electricity Board;

(b) whether Government would consider to include the KPFC in the approved market borrowing programme list of the Central Government;

(c) whether Government would grant exemptions to KPFC of condition (ii) and (iii) of the schedule 6 and 7 relating to NRI deposits; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Decision will be taken in consultation with Reserve Bank of India.

Growth of health insurance sector

1704. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the anticipated growth of health insurance sector in another five years from the present 2002-03 premium amount of Rs.1,000 crores;

(b) what is the share of the private sector companies in the health insurance sector and whether present measures are adequate to safeguard the interests of policy holders in the private sector; and

(c) whether there is any perceptible difference between the time-frame of settlement of claims by the State-owned and private companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has reported that the health insurance premium may go upto Rs. 1,600 crores in the next five years.

(b) The share of private sector general insurance companies is approximately 9% of the total health insurance premium. IRDA has reported that the safeguards envisaged to protect the interests of policy holders are adequate.

(c) Yes, Sir. With the introduction of the system of Third Party Administors (TPAs) in health insurance, the time taken to settle the claims by the public sector general insurance companies is expected to reduce considerably.

Expenditure on cultivation of opium

1705. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) how much money is spent by Government annually on administrative machinery which controls and regulates the legitimate cultivation of opium;

(b) how much foreign exchange is earned by Government from sale of opium every year; and

(c) what is the approximate quantity of opium that is diverted to illicit market and how effective our mechanism is to control it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Sir, a sum of about Rs. 14.83 crore was spent during the Financial Year 2001-02 by Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) on administrative machinery for the legitimate cultivation of opium.

(b) The amount of foreign exchange earned by Government from the sale of opium during the Financial Year 2001-02 was Rs. 209.41 crore.

(c) As diversion of opium to the illicit market is a clandestine activity, the actual quantity of opium that is diverted is not known. The seizure figures of opium as reported by the various drug law enforcement agencies, however, indicate that there is no significant diversion of opium.

Strict control is exercised by the Central Bureau of Narcotics, Gwalior over licit opium cultivation from the stage of the sowing of opium seeds to the stage of collection of opium produced by the cultivators. The area under opium cultivation is subject to 100% physical measurement and test measurement on random basis by the supervisory officers. At the time of harvesting intensive patrolling and preventive checks are conducted in the poppy growing areas with the help of the Police, the Customs and Central Excise Departments. Other measures include